

# Regulation could exceed EPA authority

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By Tim Echols

When I was a kid, we sang a song in Sunday school about the wise man building his house upon the rock. The second verse was about the foolish man building his house upon the sand. I think the president's energy policy advisers are building that second house, and their latest efforts will do little more than cost our country billions.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently announced the long-awaited policy on carbon dioxide at existing power plants across the country. I spent a weekend reading and posting on social media the most egregious parts of the document. As an energy official for Georgia, I should advise you to open a new savings account, because this EPA rule is going to hurt.

It is not completely clear the EPA can actually implement a carbon policy. Remember, the president was unable to get his "cap and trade" policy through Congress, and that was all about carbon. I also believe this "reduction" in carbon approach goes well beyond what the Clean Air Act intended; it was originally designed to regulate power plants, not set energy policy.



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The EPA rule further erodes state powers and the Georgia Public Service Commission's responsibility to determine how power is produced. This is not the first time our president has encroached on state sovereignty.

As AJC columnist Kyle Wingfield points out, the rule would create a "perverse" incentive to burn more coal elsewhere, "because absent a ban on exports, American coal will still be mined, shipped overseas in massive quantities, and probably sold at cheaper prices, to countries whose power plants have virtually no regulations on them."

But those on the president's team say the EPA rule will go a long way to persuade others to join the fight to save the planet.

When you read the 1,640-

plus pages of the EPA rule, you will hopefully conclude what I did. This rule is about philosophy, politics and legacy, not science. On Page 66, the document states that carbon concentrations "by the end of the century would increase to levels that the Earth has not experienced for millions of years." We have heard this before.

Before the government enacts another energy rule, why doesn't it first keep its promise about handling nuclear waste? Nuclear waste is harmful for 10,000 years or more, yet not a single ounce of it has been dealt with properly. We are not allowed to do anything else with it, such as recycling.

After we get the waste issue safely resolved, then we can look at other issues.

"Climate talk" is in vogue right now and is receiving unprecedented media coverage. That doesn't give the EPA the right to exceed its authority. Historically, the EPA has focused on the power plant itself and little else. Until Congress expressly authorizes it to do so, the EPA has no business affecting energy efficiency, solar and even the power plants we get to turn on.

I'm not sure even Congress can rein in this agency at this point in our country's development. Here's hoping for a very big wave.

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